



Three years ago, UK-based tanning group Pittards made no gloves, even though it has been a globally renowned supplier of gloving leather for decades. A desire to make maximum value of the sheep and bovine leather it is producing at its tannery in Ethiopia led to the setting up of its own finished product factory in the African country's capital, Addis Ababa.

The value of adding value

*P*ittards Products Manufacturing (PPM) is the name the tanning group based in the south-west of England has given to a new finished product division that it set up in Addis Ababa three years ago. It started with a team of 50 largely untrained people in cutting and sewing operations, but has grown quickly. In total, 700 people work full time at PPM now in four factories that are separate but within easy reach of each other in an industrial zone close to the Ethiopian capital's international

airport. General manager and commercial director of the operation, Tsedenia Mekbib, explains that Pittards acquired each building at different times, as the space became available and as business expansion required. "Having four gives us the capacity to keep growing," she explains. She anticipates having a workforce of 1,000 before the end of 2014 and for this total to grow to as many as 5,000 in 2017. "None of our employees had made gloves before, but their skill levels have advanced so quickly. It's



BEAST to Beauty

new for people here to make gloves and our people are proud of what they are achieving. We've had lots of shoe production here, but gloves are new." The factory started a second shift in January this year and is on track to double its capacity in the coming years from the current 5,000 pairs per day to 10,000.

The company is in the process of acquiring a fifth site at the same industrial zone, which it will convert into a common canteen area for all PPM workers. It also has its own store, a small boutique at the Hilton hotel in downtown Addis Ababa, selling gloves, bags, jackets and small leathers goods produced at PPM. Jason Perry is Pittards country director for Ethiopia. He explains that high levels of quality and craftsmanship are appreciated by the many visitors to the African country

these days. They understand immediately and like the authenticity of the goods on offer, made in Ethiopia by Ethiopian people from Ethiopian leather.

Authentic products

PPM's bread-and-butter at the moment is a range of high-quality work gloves, made for US customer Wells Lamont, which is part of the Berkshire Hathaway group whose founder, Warren Buffet, is famous for investing in good products that ordinary people genuinely need and want. Wells Lamont supplies gloves to major retail chains across the US. Demand is strong and PPM is currently exporting 100,000 pairs of these work gloves per month.

Ms Mekbib devotes one of the busiest of her four manufacturing areas, factory

number two, entirely to this product, with cutting and stitching operatives divided into teams that compete against one another for speed, volume and accuracy. There are monthly awards for the best performers, with phone cards and other practical items among the prizes they can win. Perhaps the greatest bustle of all is in factory number three, in which a mix of work glove and fashion glove manufacturing goes on.

Stitching operatives who perform consistently at the highest level on work gloves can move to be part of the fashion glove stitching team, which is more delicate work and commands a higher rate of pay. Members of the work glove team in factory three have a constant visual reminder that people do progress at PPM, that there are genuine possibilities for

PPM started with a team of 50 but aims to have 1,000 people in place before the end of 2014, and to increase this to 5,000 people in 2017. ALL CREDITS: PITTARDS



Tanning group Pittards opened its Products Manufacturing facility (PPM) in Addis Ababa three years ago.



Production at PPM concentrates on work gloves and fashion gloves, exporting 100,000 pairs per month.



PPM has built up connections with a local orphanage, offering training and jobs to young people at the end of their schooling.

moving up, that they too can advance and earn more money. Production is building up in factories one and four, with the former housing a small team working on jackets, bags and small leathersgoods, and the latter a newer group of around 20 people that is combining off-cuts of leather with fabric to make lower-cost bags and other items in a range PPM calls Qo'da, for sale locally. The name of the range comes from the Amharic word for leather, which Pittards has registered as a trademark.

Locally sourced leather

All of the leather in use at PPM is from the Pittards Ethiopian Tannery, about two hours away by road, next to the village of Ejersa. Around 80% of the finished leather the tannery produces is for export. Most of the other 20%, which is for the domestic market, used to go to Ethiopian shoe manufacturers. "But a lot of that 20% for the local market is coming here now," Jason Perry explains. "I would say around 8 million square-feet of our leather stays in Ethiopia, and 5 million square-feet of that is coming here, sheep leather for the fashion gloves and cow leather for the work gloves. We have big expansion plans at the tannery too and we are very pleased that PPM is growing and is going to consume more of our leather."

For the financial year that ended on June 30, 2014, Pittards Ethiopia Tannery was the country's biggest exporter of finished leather, while PPM was the biggest exporter of gloves; PPM was the leather sector's biggest exporter of finished product of all kinds, with the exception of Chinese footwear manufacturer Huajian Group.

Another aspect that pleases Jason Perry is that appreciation of the leather the tannery produces is high. "We use all the leather well," he says, "from putting great importance on the initial cutting to making sure we never throw away a single piece of scrap leather. We have a 'zero waste' policy and these scraps are going into our Qo'da range of bags."

Loyal workforce

Tsedenia Mekbib pays tribute to Ethiopia's Leather Industries Development Institute, which is run by the government, for



PPM has recently begun to make bags and jackets too, with all of the leather coming from the Pittards Ethiopian Tannery.

its success in giving some of PPM's employees a good grounding in skills such as stitching leather. The company has passed on other skills itself in training its people up. The company has also made a point of employing people with disabilities. "Unfortunately, there's still some stigma around disabilities here," she says. "Since the beginning, we have had 15 people with disabilities and, for some of them, this is the first job they have ever had."

There is a link to a local orphanage, too, a facility that specialises in giving ex-street children a safe place to live and encouraging them to complete their schooling, but they have to leave at the age of 18 and try to make their way in the world of work. "We have taken two young people from there already," the commercial director says, "and we will take more. One of them has already become a supervisor; she's very ambitious."

Jason Perry comments that another thing that pleases Pittards is that PPM employees are staying, and this in an environment in which there is competition for good people. "In Pittards in the UK employees have an average length of service of around 15 years, and we want to bring that to PPM too," he explains. "We have good young people here and we want to keep them. It's always been our strategy to have an integrated supply chain and we would have done this earlier if we could. This is an important part of our future." ●



Die Chemie stimmt [Ⓢ]

Simply good chemistry [Ⓢ]

Creamos buena química [Ⓢ]

La chimie à l'écoute de vos besoins [Ⓢ]

Creiamo buona chimica [Ⓢ]

A Química Certa [Ⓢ]

我们天生对味 [Ⓢ]



T Trumpler
Simply good chemistry